

WASHINGTON, DC – The following is Rep. Pete Stark's statement regarding President Bush's Medicare plan:

"Today's announcement of the President's plan for Medicare leaves no doubt – he wants to end Medicare as we know it. His plan puts seniors in an unconscionable bind. In order to get an inadequate prescription drug benefit, they will be forced to join second-rate, low quality medical plans. He's forcing seniors to play Russian roulette with their health.

"Don't forget, Medicare was created because the private health insurance industry would not provide seniors with affordable health coverage. Yet, if the President gets his way, Medicare will be privatized. Seniors will once again be at the mercy of the for-profit health insurance industry to try to obtain the health care they need. It didn't work then and it won't work now.

"The President's plan is not one of choice. If his plan is enacted, seniors' ability to get the health care they need will depend entirely on their ability to pay, their willingness to give up choice of doctors and hospitals, and on whether they happen to live in a part of the country where the private health insurance industry thinks they can make a big enough profit off them.

"This could be the end of Medicare. I will fight it every step of the way. I implore America's seniors and people with disabilities to see through the President's rhetoric of "reform." The only reform this President is interested in is turning seniors' health care back over to the whims of the private health insurance marketplace that refused to care for them in the first place. It shows exactly who he stands with – the profit-driven health insurance industry and big drug companies – not America's seniors."